

Half a Grand Square

Calvin Campbell

In Modern Western Square Dancing, most callers make an effort to get all four couples involved in the action all the time. In calling to beginners or calling community dances that is largely a bad idea. Why? Because new or infrequent dancers need to see “basics” done as well as dance “Basics”. If they never get a chance to watch a **Right & Left Thru** danced, then they never get to form a visual image of how that action looks.

Square dancing for people who have never danced before, or people who seldom dance, is largely built around teaching square-dance-routines rather than teaching square dance “basics”. In dancing these routines, you use square dance “basics” such as **Stars, Circle, Forward & Back, Couple Promenade, Arm Turns**, etc, but the dancers really think more in terms of the floor pattern or dance routine you create with these basics. Let look at some examples.

If you call Head Couples **Circle Left ... Star Left back to home**, the dancers link these two actions together. The Side Couples watch the action and hopefully think, “I can do that.”. Everyone is following the movement pattern of the dance routine and not really memorizing the words or the individual parts of the action. This is a very normal way for learning how to do physical actions. It is easier to duplicate some action than to listen to someone describe an action and to try and figure out what they are talking about.

If the Heads Couples do something, the Side Couples expect to get their turn in doing the same thing. If the caller does not give them their turn, the Side Couples are disappointed. The Side Couples also expect to get their turn to perform first.

The visual view (show me how) of any dance allows the teacher to insert dance routines in a program that at first seem hard. You can teach something as difficult as a **Grand Square** to beginners before a Community Dance if you first show them what a **Grand Square** looks like. If they can see the interlocking movements Head Couples and the Side Couples, then teaching them to do the same movements becomes much easier.

To do this, you need dancers who are experienced in doing a Grand Square and doing it correctly and in time to the music. This is why I seldom try a Grand Square at a beginner party. I just feel the visual part of “the teach” is that important.

If you decide to teach a **Grand Square** at a Beginner Dance Party, I suggest you teach only half a **Grand Square**. That takes up 16 beats of music and provides just as much satisfaction and avoids half the crashes. The breakdowns usually happen on the reversed 16 steps started half way through the **Grand Square**. At the end of **Half a Grand Square**, everyone is back home and you can **Circle Left all the way around**, or do something else for the other 16 beats of music.

The movement pattern of a **Grand Square** can also be effectively taught without starting in a square. Just have every **Couple Promenade** four steps as couples in one big circle. Have the Couples face and back away four steps. Then face Promenade direction and back up four steps. Face each other and walk together four steps. The dancers have now completed one of the two dance patterns in a **Grand Square**. Everybody is doing the same thing. Practice that first part for several repetitions and then teach the second part.

